

## **MTM/VF EIS**

### **Community Narrative: Werth, West Virginia**

**Interviewer:** Let me ask you first off, how did you and your family come to live in the work area? Tell me a little bit about that background, if you would.

**Subject:** Well, my husband I married him in 1981. We lived in the heart of Summersville. I always liked elbowroom. So, his office was located at Werth and they had extensive properties there so, we built a log cabin behind what was originally the Muddlety grade school. So it was for convenience of having more space.

**Interviewer:** And you moved there as your permanent home?

**Subject:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay.

**Subject:** We have since moved to Canvas.

**Interviewer:** Were you living in Summersville or in this area for a particular economic reason, like for your husband or did you work for a specific industry in this area or?

**Subject:** I worked for Brady and Klein Coal Company.

**Interviewer:** And that did primarily underground mining or everything?

**Subject:** Well, they did underground and then they subcontracted Massey Mine Strip Mining.

**Interviewer:** What kind of work did you do for them?

**Subject:** Bookkeeping.

**Interviewer:** What about your husband? Did he work for the coal companies or?

**Subject:** He owned his own coal company.

**Interviewer:** He owned his own coal company. Okay. Did he do all different kinds of mining as well?

**Subject:** No. He mainly did deep mining. He did have some Massey mines that were stripped. Or contract, I am sorry it wasn't Massey it was contract that he had contracted the land area to them.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Did umm... Let me get this in order. When you moved to the Werth area, about what time was that would you say?

**Subject:** Eighty-four.

**Interviewer:** Eighty-four. So at that point really most of the surface mining in the Werth area had ceased or was there still some?

**Subject:** There was still some.

**Interviewer:** There was still some. Okay. What umm... You mentioned that you moved to that area in order to have the elbowroom. What was it that you enjoyed about that community would you say? If you had to put it into words.

**Subject:** The privacy of it.

**Interviewer:** The privacy. Ummm. Was that something that you felt changed at all because of the surface mining or no?

**Subject:** No. I didn't see no change. In the area that we lived.

**Interviewer:** Right. Right.

**Interviewer II:** How close in your home, how close in proximity were you to any mining operations? In this case I am talking surface mining operations.

**Subject:** Okay. You are talking the strips.

**Interviewer II:** Right.

**Subject:** Umm. We lived just off of Route 55. You went up a hill and around, oh maybe 500 yards or something up a hill. Before you started up that hill, on the right hand side of that road, umm, let see, I am trying to remember the people, I don't remember the people that mined it. But umm, at this present time, but it was stripped right there on that side of the road. In sometime in the mid-eighties. Eighty-six, something like that.

**Interviewer:** Were there any other changes in the community that you could say, were noticeable between that time, before, during or after?

**Subject:** Not necessarily. Coal trucks on the road. Which is...

**Interviewer:** Right, that is pretty standard.

**Subject:** Ah hum.

**Interviewer:** Did you, were there any physical changes to your home at all, from blasting or anything of that nature?

**Subject:** Oh no. No.

**Interviewer:** And then, I wanted to ask you about your wells. Did you have any changes, whether they were they were due to the surface mining or not? Did you have any changes to your water sources or water supply on your property?

**Subject:** No. No. You got to remember that we were up on the hill. The strip was down next to the road.

**Interviewer:** Right. So you were in an unusual position compared to some of the people in the community in that respect.

**Subject:** But there was a school right there, next door, and there's no, umm, no problems there. Of course you may even want to contact the Board of Education because that, at that point in time it was Muddlety grade school.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids go to school in that area at that point or where?

**Subject:** They were already grown.

**Interviewer:** Would you say there was any... How would you classify or how would you discuss the future of that community both when you were living there and sort of now as you see it?

**Subject:** Well, as I mentioned earlier, in that particular area the coal had pretty much been mined out. Stripped or deep mined. So, of course industry had to look elsewhere for, you had to look else where for employment. As you probably already know it pretty much shifted to timber and tourism in this area. And the tourism is really ah, the rafting and the lake and everything is ah, they are promoting that in Nicholas County now.

**Interviewer II:** Is that maybe one, some of the reasons why the commercial strip if you will, out along 19, where all the motels and restaurants have become present? Is that, do you think that is because of the tourism industry and the changes in the economy in the area?

**Subject:** Yeah, it is, they have found that it is a good stop off for people that when they, either way you come down on 79, if you are coming from the north, if you are coming out of Charlestown, there is a big space there that there is not hotels, motels or restaurants. As well as from the north, other than around Flatwoods, and that is still a good piece from Summersville. And it is a good stop off area for people and we have found that has been productive.

**Interviewer:** So, in your opinion that the community of Werth, in terms of how it relates to this industry, I mean, it's got another source of income and a lot of economical development going on to make that a positive?

**Subject:** Hum, hum.

**Interviewer II:** Is any of that economic development that is occurring today, based on the tourism industry, is any of that benefited from the past coal mining operations? Or any of that land that was formally mined, has that been ever used to promote tourism or...

**Subject:** I don't know about as much tourism as, in my personal opinion, you say that they flattened the mountain and that is just what is there then.

**Interviewer II:** Well, I might say flattened in some cases or it might have been opportunities where you know, you have seat topography if you will, you well know it ah, here in West Virginia there is possibly opportunities where we may have encountered or heard about or read about what is actually...

**Subject:** Highwalls?

**Interviewer II:** I am sorry.

**Subject:** You call them highwalls?

**Interviewer II:** Right.

**Subject:** But they, the reclamation has taken care of that. If you will look a little closer, that there is a certain grade that has to be there, that vegetation will grow on.

**Interviewer II:** Right it almost has to be put back to its original contours, as much as possible.

**Subject:** That is what the reclamation bill really did.

**Interviewer II:** Right.

**Subject:** And ah, that was my point I was going to get to is that they basically, for a period of time, become grasslands. Which for the all the vegetation that comes is good for the animals and the birds and environment... for them to prosper. I think this "Keep West Virginia Green"; the coal miners did not fall short in returning their areas to green.

**Interviewer II:** We saw a lot of people say that they have seen at least in their opinion, have notice an increase in wildlife in those areas particularly because of the vegetation that has been provided in terms of grass and forage. And also ...

**Subject:** So it's not just left dead.

**Interviewer II:** Right. Exactly.

**Interviewer:** But would you agree with that assessment? Or, that you said that we've heard that from other people and that you would agree with that.

**Subject:** Yes. Oh yeah.

**Interviewer II:** Right.

**Subject:** And I think that because my family is hunters, that is a big plus.

**Interviewer II:** Right.

**Subject:** If you want to call it tourism it brings... there is some that promote hunting.

**Interviewer:** Absolutely.

**Interviewer II:** So there might be a sort of an indirect benefit, so to speak, benefits may not be completely direct but what was the mining industry and what had been left over or actually reclaimed has provided some economic benefit to this area?

**Subject:** And eventually there will be a forest.

**Interviewer II:** In your opinion. Right.

**Interviewer:** One of the questions I was going to ask you and this sort of leads into it, is in terms of benefits to the community if you are thinking of the community of Werth, for example, for having the mining come in, whether it is economic jobs or what have you, if you were going to, could you say what you think those benefits might be or are?

**Subject:** Well I think there is a lot of people had a good base of employment at the time that the coal industry was booming. From that they were able to put their children through college or whatever, which in my opinion betters any community.

**Interviewer II:** Does this community itself, in terms of Werth, do you feel it has benefited in terms of employment opportunities the mining operations offered in this area?

**Subject:** Absolutely.

**Interviewer II:** And direct benefit to the Werth community in terms of those people being employed?

**Subject:** Yes.

**Interviewer II:** And the benefits of them being employed, what impact, positive impact in this case possibly, have...

**Subject:** Otherwise they would have to go out of state. Which a lot of people in other parts, like the northern part of West Virginia where there's not many mines and not much of anything else... and I can remember 25-30 years ago they had to go to Ohio, they had to go to South Carolina somewhere for employment.

**Interviewer II:** Right.

**Subject:** Because they didn't have that.

**Interviewer:** They didn't have jobs in that industry.

**Interviewer II:** Now what is happening now, as the mining industry in this area is waning off if you will, or moving elsewhere... What's happening to that employment base? If you could just tell me?

**Subject:** As I mentioned before, a lot of them shifted to timber, tourism, and when I say tourism I mean all aspects of it; motels have to have some one to manage them and all of the different restaurants, whatever. It has just shifted to another resource.

**Interviewer II:** So, during the mining operations you feel, in your opinion the community benefited even though the mines, now during the post-mining period, the community is still benefiting because it's been, I won't put words in your mouth, but it's benefited because it's changed and found other opportunities for economic incentives in terms of employment. It has actually changed with the shifting, with the times. Before...

**Subject:** Even the railroad tracks that came in for ah, to haul the coal out, those tracks have been taken up and they have been made into trails for tourism.

**Interviewer II:** Rail-trails. You talked about during-mining and post-mining, what about pre-mining what were the conditions, economic conditions here like before the mines?

**Subject:** I can't answer that.

**Interviewer II:** Okay.

**Subject:** I only moved to Nicholas County in sixty-eight.

**Interviewer II:** And the reason again, like you said you aren't in a position to answer that question because you moved in when the mining operations were beginning to open up.

**Subject:** I didn't even move to the Werth area, well Summersville, until the late seventies.

**Interviewer II:** Interesting. Okay.

**Interviewer:** You would be in an unusual position probably to answer this question, ah one of the things that we were curious about trying to find out is how the companies interacted with the community in terms of people who may have had complaints or even though they didn't have complaints and just wanted to find out what was going on, you know in terms of the mining around them.

**Subject:** Umm, no I am sorry I wouldn't be in a position to answer that truthfully. I do know that the coal industry did a great deal for Nicholas County. I know that personally because my husband had very much to do with that. It was... he's the one that ram-rodged the site for the ball fields and the high school. The new high school is right here on 19.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me a little bit about that? What do you mean ram-rodged?

**Subject:** He furnished the equipment; he came down and did a lot of the work himself at no cost to the county.

**Interviewer:** He helped build it and see that it was built?

**Subject:** He didn't build, but he prepared the site with equipment, his own equipment from his company.

**Interviewer II:** So there was direct benefit to the community as a whole had some direct benefit due to your husband, in this case good will, and actually provided services

**Subject:** He brought his men down and he paid his men but he didn't charge anybody for it. He also was the fund-raiser for the hospital and because he was known, so well known in the community, he was able to tap the coal industry get money and got funds to start the Summersville, to expand I am sorry, to expand the Summersville hospital.

**Interviewer II:** What is, are the coal industry here is the community benefiting otherwise from the coal industry after it has left? I know during the time period, you know they have benefited, you know based upon your account, from your husband giving back to the community

in terms of being a good neighbor, from the coal industry. Does the community, are they, I am not saying this in a bad context, are they still seeing benefits from the coal industry or since they have gone?

**Subject:** I think you would have to ask some retired miners how their health insurance is paid. Where did they get their retirement benefits from? Which I think you will get an answer that the coal industry is still very much in.

**Interviewer II:** Involved with the community in that sense. Interesting.

**Subject:** Did you not think of retirement? You know they paid into that fund they have to live on it now.

**Interviewer II:** Sure. Exactly. So, even though the mining operations aren't here providing a direct, in terms that they had to go else where for the mineral resources, there is still some continuing positive benefits that the coal mining industry has had for the Werth community?

**Subject:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** This is a little bit off the subject of Werth, but do you, did you all see the permit notices that they are required to put in the paper these days? And was anything like that done that you can recall about any of the mining that is going on around Werth, that you have seen in the paper?

**Subject:** It is required by law.

**Interviewer:** So you remember seeing those?

**Subject:** You have to.... I mean, that is a requirement.

**Interviewer II:** One of the things we have talked to a couple people, we have gotten indications as we asked that same question, and said that "Yes" they have seen them and we know that the state requires them to published, the permit. Some of the information that we got, we just want to see what your reaction is to, some of the notices although they were published may not have been legible or maybe understood by non-coal mining people. People that were not associated with the coal mining operations, not use to the terminology and also to the maps that are published with the legal advertisement, may not have been clear enough. In your opinion did you feel, and legal advertisement that you saw for the permit, did you feel that they were...

**Subject:** I didn't... I usually, if I didn't see the map clearly I would read the description. And I well, because my husband had different sites and around and everything, I sort of had an interest, so that is why I read them. And as I said if I did not understand the map exactly where the details that they were trying to describe, I would refer to the description.



**Interviewer II:** Now one of those legal advertisements, of course that provides an opportunity for the public to express concerns or to have questions and have an opportunity to ask questions about the particular permit. Did your husband ever was he ever involved or have opportunities to discuss...

**Subject:** I really don't know.

**Interviewer:** That's okay we don't want you to comment on something if you really don't know.

**Subject:** No. No. I, really, I'm sorry.

**Interviewer II:** That is fine. I was just sort of curious if you, if there was any reaction to the public if there was any reaction to the advertisement?

**Subject:** I don't know.

**Interviewer II:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** The only other real part of the questions that I had to ask you is about your decision to no longer live in the Werth area and what that may or may not relate to any of the mines.

**Subject:** My husband and, he just passed away in August. He was eighty-seven years old. The reason we moved from the Werth area was the same reason almost opposite to when we got here. He felt that we needed to be closer to family, because of his age and he wanted me close to family if something should happen to him. So in ah, about four years ago, we moved to the Canvas area.

**Interviewer:** So the reason for moving to the Canvas area had nothing to do with the present of mining in the community?

**Subject:** Oh no it didn't. No. We just wanted to be closer to family. Which I live next door to my son.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Well you know, I think that fairly well covers all the questions that we really wanted to ask you. Did you have anything else that you wanted to say? Or wanted to discuss with us, about questions about the study or anything of that nature?

**Subject:** No. I just had a question when I was going to be asked earlier. Ummm, what other aspects are you going, do you go to the economic aspects, tax bases and ...?

**Interviewer II:** One of the things that we had actually looked at early on in the study was to actually collect a variety of data in including census data, population, income, what were the

employment conditions like. And that would be historic not just based upon.... Based upon County... State and County and made comparison on those. Ah, I think with that we started in seventy or maybe sixty and actually looked at each of the census, depending on census information and did studies on those. What were the labor? You know, who were people employed by during those times? Looked at mining production. Historically a lot of scientific analysis looking at the mine production on, mining production in this area verses other areas in the United States. What that resource is being used for? Electric generation power plant and so forth and so on, and also to, like Alexa said, a lot these biological like in terms of water aquatics are just a myriad of information that was looked at early on in the study. And this, Alexa pointed out, was trying to get more in tune with the community aspects. And this is really an objective stand point to these questions were really formulated to ask people that were directly involved with the mining operations. And the randomness about it is we don't, it can go both ways.

**Subject:** I was wondering if you had contact "specific name" at all?

**Interviewer:** No. That name didn't come up on the list of people.

**Subject:** Gracie Inc.?

**Interviewer:** As one of the property owners?

**Subject:** Um, hum.

**Interviewer:** I did see that.

**Subject:** That is "specific name." He's a politician. I didn't know whether you picked on politicians or not?

**Interviewer II:** Yeah all that was ...

**Interviewer:** Not on purpose anyway.

**Interviewer II:** All that was done ...

**Subject:** He uses that place right down there. He owns, the reason I asked is because he is the one that purchased the tippie from my husband, the tippie for coal.

**Interviewer II:** Interesting. Yeah all of the interviewees that we've sat down with and will be sitting down with in the future, are all based on random selection. Based upon the tax roles in the case studies communities that we are looking. So there is no interplay by us to select who we choose. It is all random, so whomever's name comes up. We don't know what their position is before hand only until we come and sit down and start asking you these questions to try and get more information. So we didn't know what your affiliation was before we came to this interview and

ah, and our questions, I hope, aren't poignant to making you go on any defensive. We are just asking questions that everybody gets asked. To see what your position is and feel what your opinions are about the coal mining industry in this area.

**Subject:** Well, he wouldn't qualify because we never lived in the Werth area. He only owned property there. So I guess that is why they excluded him.

**Interviewer:** Right. Basically if it had said, for example, Gracie Inc. I would have moved onto the first individual or the most recent individual that was listed as a property owner.

**Interviewer II:** So overall just the Werth area itself, you feel that, although you can't attest to the pre-mining conditions that you felt that since you have lived here and even now, that you felt that it was a thriving community. You tell me. I am not going to, what is your overall assessment of the Werth area and how it is operating today and existing today.

**Subject:** Well there is really... it is growing in population. The umm.... What is the overall?

**Interviewer II:** Overall condition, your perspective, your opinions on the ...

**Subject:** I think it is a pretty much a thriving community for the fact that, I don't know... West Virginia, is I think, has better employment than some other states at this time. But not living, I haven't lived there for four years, so I don't maybe... can't qualify to answer...

**Interviewer II:** That's fine. That is fine.

**Subject:** But from the looks of things, there's no not that many rundown buildings, there's not damage or anything.

**Interviewer II:** Right. Exactly. Okay, I appreciate that.

**Interviewer:** Okay, I appreciate your time. I really do. Just that you came out .....